

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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GRETCHEN.

By the Author of "*Dame Durden*," "*My Lord Conceit*,"
"*Darby and Joan*," "*Corinna*," etc.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER VIII.

ADRIAN LYLE walked slowly and thoughtfully homewards in the light of the June sunset. The memory of Alexis Kenyon lingered with him despite himself. She puzzled, she disturbed, and almost—so he thought—disgusted him. Yet the cruel cynicism, the critical coldness, the audacity and skill of her mind, asserted themselves with a strength he could not deny.

A growing sense of annoyance was present with him as he thought of that conversation, and felt how weak his arguments had been, how wanting in zeal and fervour, and true purpose. That cold face; the little, cruel, insolent smile on those perfect lips; had shattered his weapons for once, had almost made him doubt that the faith he upheld was after all worth living and dying for; that the human soul was as mystical and divine as he had always upheld it to be; that the creed, of which he was a messenger and teacher, was the real and soul-felt truth of a glorious Christianity!

The little sting she had implanted rankled in his breast. He had gone to her full of purpose, and with a cause to plead. How tame, and spiritless, and foolish it all looked now!

It was the man, not the priest, who confronted him, who walked side by side with him through the golden shades of the avenue—the man in his weakness, his imperfections, his vain yearnings, his struggles after that perfection which it is not in mortal to attain. Past years of

frenzied doubt and eager research rushed back to his memory; days when the divinity of heaven had been unrealisable—an abstraction, to which his mental powers could give no shape, and in which his soul could take no comfort. He had thought that such doubts were past, such dark hours ended; and yet a look, a word, had recalled them to life. He felt that there was neither grace, nor loveliness, nor consolation in such a mind as Alexis Kenyon's, and yet it held a power that combated his own, and turned his noblest aspirations into myths and dreams.

"How much harm a woman like that can do!" he thought to himself; "making life a mockery of every pure and noble thing, its best efforts futile, its ideals purposeless, its ambitions insignificant. She would turn even prayer to ridicule—and call the soul's agony a useless waste of feeling and energy, as futile as the cry of a child in the dark to some unknown Power that cares nothing for its sufferings!"

And yet, with all these memories of her, he could not but acknowledge how dangerously fascinating she was; how fatally possible it might be for her to hold, and control, and subjugate a man's life, crushing with careless feet whatever lay in her path; putting aside with that small, white, cruel hand, another claim, another influence that rashly combated her own. And, as he thought of this, he remembered Gretchen.

Was it possible that Neale Kenyon—weak, wavering, unstable as he knew him to be—could safely brave the tempting and the influence of such a woman? True, he did not seem to care for her. There was more of dread than attraction in their present relationship—at least on the young fellow's own part; but if she chose—!

His thoughts ceased at that point;

ceased with a sharp and sudden dread of pursuing the subject which haunted him so often and so persistently. He became suddenly conscious that he was not alone ; that he was looking at someone or something that brought back a sharp and subtle memory.

Abruptly he paused, lifting eyes and face to the level of another.

Léon Bari stood before him, under the shadows of the drooping boughs.

Adrian Lyle's first impulse was to move aside and pass ; but something in the man's face compelled him, against his will, to stand still, as he was standing.

"Do you wish to speak to me ?" he asked abruptly, as Bari removed his hat with ostentatious politeness.

"If Monsieur will pardon the liberty," answered the man suavely.

"I am at your service," said the young clergyman coldly.

Bari looked furtively at the pale, grave face.

"I believe, Monsieur," he said, "that I am not mistaken in supposing you would do a service for a lady, especially one who is sick and suffering. I have a message for you from one, and one in whom I think you are somewhat interested."

"Perhaps," said Adrian Lyle, impatiently, "you would come to the point, it would save time."

The man bowed.

"Certainly, Monsieur," he said. "The message is from Mrs. Kenyon."

Adrian Lyle started ; his face flushed stormily.

"Mrs. Kenyon—" he faltered, "what does she want with me ?"

"Your ministration, perhaps," said Bari, with a scarcely-perceptible sneer. "I am not commissioned to say more."

"But," said Adrian Lyle suspiciously, "why does she send me a message through you ? Where is her husband ?"

"Mr. Kenyon," said Bari, "is in London. He is very busy. There is great excitement there. It is not unlikely he may have to rejoin his regiment in India almost immediately."

"And she—Mrs. Kenyon—is she in London also ?"

"No. She is at Leawoods, in Hants. Mr. Kenyon took a small house there for her."

"And you say she is ill—and wants to see me ?" pursued Adrian Lyle in a troubled voice, as that old promise recurred to his mind.

"That is what I am commissioned to tell Monsieur. Mr. Kenyon also bade me use all haste."

"Of course I will come," said Adrian Lyle, "if she needs me. But if she is ill she requires a doctor."

"Doubtless Mr. Kenyon has seen to that," said Bari. "He despatched me here with that message to you. Probably," he added—as if it were an afterthought—"Madame has some idea of changing her religion. When ladies are ill they are often fanciful, and she has spoken of it often."

"Give me the address," said Adrian Lyle coldly.

He felt the old distrust, the old dislike, to this man increasing every moment. It seemed so odd, so mysterious, that he should be summoned in this fashion to Gretchen, unless—and his heart seemed to stand still with sudden terror at the thought—unless, indeed, she was in danger.

The fear seemed to chill his blood to ice. That beautiful, girlish, passionate creature in the hands of life's common foe ! And yet it might be. Lives as young, as innocent, as fair as hers had been culled by the grim Reaper with his cruel sickle again and again, even in his experience. There was no rule by which to limit the power or the decrees of Death.

He took the paper from Bari's hand, and hurried on down the length of the beech avenue, deaf and blind to everything around. Gretchen ill ! Gretchen in danger ! Gretchen needing him ! That was all he could think of.

The mastering power of sudden emotion swept all other memories away. He forgot Alexis Kenyon ; he forgot his duties in the parish ; almost, he forgot Neale. When calmness in some measure returned, he went up to the Rectory to ask for the necessary leave of absence. The Rector, stout, rubicund, easy-going, enjoying a nap in his study-chair, listened to his Curate's demand and explanation with ill-concealed annoyance.

It meant additional duty for himself ; it meant the laboured composition of two sermons instead of one ; it meant disturbance and vexation at the present moment ; and the Rector was sharp and ill-tempered in his response to the request.

"Impossible !" he said, "impossible !"

Adrian Lyle gently but firmly insisted that the summons was imperative ; that, in fact, he must obey it at any risk or sacrifice.

The Rector knew the value of his young assistant well enough to consider a quarrel impolitic; but his grudging and hard-won assent sent Adrian Lyle home in a state of mind the reverse of comfortable. Still, he told himself he must go, and an hour later he set out for his destination.

The journey was one across country, necessitating many changes and many vexatious delays. It was long past midnight when he arrived at the station named in his directions. It was a little, damp, out-of-the-way place, in charge of a single sleepy porter, who told him that his destination was five miles off; that no conveyance was possible; and that the one small inn of the village would probably be closed.

The information was not inspiriting; but Adrian Lyle set out to walk the distance, taking his bag in his hand.

The night had fallen dark and cloudy. But he had no difficulty in making out the road, as it ran like a white, curving line between the hedgerows.

The odours of honeysuckle and wild flowers greeted him pleasantly after the hot and dusty journey. He took off his hat and bared his head to the night wind, and, for the first time since he had left Medehurst, a sense of rest and peace stole over his troubled senses, and calmed the fever in his veins.

"It will be too late to go to her now," he thought to himself. "I will wait till morning."

Yet, even as he said the words, a strange desire seized him to see where she lived, to look at the lights in her window, where, perhaps, some watcher waited for the dawn as anxiously as he himself.

He felt certain that Kenyon must be there. The place was near enough to London for him to run down by the last train and return by the first; and surely, in this hour of a young wife's first illness, her husband would be by her side.

Mile after mile he walked steadily on, passing now and then a farm-house, or a cottage. He came at last to a place where two roads met.

He paused then. A sudden flush rose to his face, a sudden terror shook his heart. One of these roads led to the village, the other would take him to the little house called "The Laurels," where he had been told Gretchen lived.

Usually so decided and self-sufficient, it struck Adrian Lyle as strange that he could not at once make up his mind to

pass on, and continue his way to the village inn. A sort of longing, a restless desire to see this house of Gretchen's, took possession of him. He tried to combat it, but it was too strong even for his strength.

Against his will, against his reason, had been the attraction that had drawn him to Gretchen's side in those dreamy, fatal hours in the old Italian cities. Against his will and against his reason now, was the longing that drew him towards her dwelling-place on this fatal night in June.

He took the road which turned aside from the village. It plunged into darkness and depths of shade, narrowing at last into a mere lane beneath the thick-leaved, overhanging trees.

He walked on, his footsteps making a faint echo in the silence—a silence which held the brooding, mysterious hush of a coming storm.

For about half a mile the lane extended, then it came to an abrupt stop, seemingly at a thick and impenetrable hedge of laurels which stood breast-high like a rampart, and afforded no glimpse of anything beyond.

In vain Adrian Lyle's eyes searched for gate or entrance. He could see nothing. While he stood there doubtful and hesitating, a long low roll of muttered thunder broke the stillness, and a vivid flash of lightning followed. The trees around trembled and shook. A cold faint wind swept across his cheek, and moaned amidst the rustling boughs which formed so thick a canopy. That momentary flash, however, had shown Adrian Lyle a small iron gate at a short distance from where he stood, set back in the deep edge of shrubs. Involuntarily he stepped towards it, and laid his hand upon the latch. It yielded to his touch. Before a second flash had rent the darkness, he was on the inside of the gate, and treading a narrow and gravelled path that wound its way among a maze of vegetation, which it was too dark to distinguish. He paused and looked up. The hurrying clouds showed a faint gleam of moonlight that was again eclipsed by darkness. The moaning wind took a louder and more threatening tone, and for an instant the thought crossed Adrian Lyle's mind that it would be wiser for him to make his way to the village, before the storm broke out in all its fury.

But as he wavered, another flash, more brilliant than any of its predecessors, showed him a small low house fronting him at but a short distance, and as he

moved forward he caught the glimmer of a light in one of the upper windows. For an instant his heart seemed to stand still; then it leaped from frozen silence into life and warmth, and sent forth its eager longings into an involuntary prayer—a prayer for the young fair life, which even now might be fighting with danger, or with death.

As in fervid words that petition took flight amidst the storm and darkness all around him, the window above was suddenly opened, and a figure stood revealed there, thrown into strong relief by the light within the chamber.

Adrian Lyle saw it and stood transfixed as if to stone. The loose white draperies, the long floating hair, the lovely face looking down at his own, and clearly recognisable even in the gloom, all came to him as a revelation of past joys and past memories.

Ill—dying—who had told him so? Who had led him here on this fool's errand?

Again the lightning leaped out from the dark horizon line, and in showing him the figure at the window with yet more dazzling clearness, revealed to her his own standing motionless below.

She leant suddenly forward; she thrust out eager face and arms from the jasmine and the roses that framed her lattice. "Neale," she cried low and soft, as if half afraid of her own hope, "Neale, is it you?"

Then a great flood of crimson rushed to Adrian Lyle's face, scorching him with hot and savage shame, and his pulses beat like hammers as he thought how he had been tricked and fooled.

"It is not Neale," he cried stormily. "It is I—Adrian Lyle! Did you not send for me?"

She sprang to her feet. All the glow and fire of her eyes turned to sudden dread.

"Mr. Lyle," she faltered. "You—at this hour. What does it mean?"

"You—you did not send for me—?" he repeated stupidly.

"No," she answered, amazed at the question. "Why should I send for you? I did not know you were even in England. Indeed"—and she laughed a little—"I think I had forgotten all about you; though, when you spoke—"

He put out his hand as if to ward off a blow. His brain seemed dizzy, and a sudden chill calm fell over his excited feelings.

"There has been some mistake," he said, "some grave error. I—I will call in the morning and explain. I heard you were ill—dying."

"I, ill!" she exclaimed. "I was never better in my life. Who could have told you such a thing?"

"It must have been a mistake," Adrian Lyle repeated in the same dazed way. "I—I am very sorry.

"But I can't understand," the girl said impatiently. "It is very odd. Where are you going?" she cried out suddenly, as she saw him moving away.

He gave no answer. At the same moment, another crash of thunder shook the width of the dark heavens, rolling and reverberating like a cannonade over the country round. The girl gave a faint, low cry of terror, and started back a pace. The lightning once again lit up the gloomy darkness, and as she clasped her shuddering hands in momentary terror, she saw a dark mass separate itself from the writhing, tossing branches that the wind had seized with giant force, separate, and sway forwards, and then fall with a dull, loud crash upon the ground.

MRS. SILAS B. BUNTHORP.

A STORY IN SIX CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER IV.

THE daily walks of Miss Coleridge and Maggie had, during the next week or so, another excitement besides the parrot. This new excitement was the constant meeting with Mr. Aylmer, who, under the pretence of taking his dogs for a walk, would stray across their path, at the unfashionably early hour Mrs. Englefield had set apart for their daily exercise. Maggie began even to look out for him. It was a new experience of hers, this handsome young man, who not only had the rare gift of making children like him, but who also exerted himself to deepen that liking, as far as this particular child was concerned. He was so strong and so gentle, and told her such funny stories, and gave her such wonderful sweets and pretty flowers. And the experience was so good, that between their meetings, she was always talking of him. Miss Coleridge might have grown jealous of her rival, if such a baseness had been possible to her; or she might have grown tired of perpetually hearing his name, only she never said so. Perhaps she began to look out for him a little too, though she,

at first, honestly discouraged the meetings. But he was not to be snubbed, and his cool perseverance, which was always courteous, won the day. She felt that to make a fuss, in face of this perfectly unconscious manner of his, would give significance to their meetings, which he never intended. Besides, she really liked him and trusted in him, believing that there was something good under the lazy, conceited, slightly sceptical exterior he presented to the world. Jack Aylmer soon found out enough to know how isolated the lives of these two were in the Englefield household, and had no fear of his acquaintance being commented upon to any member of it. That he was putting Miss Coleridge in peril; raising fatal hopes which could never be fulfilled; awaking dreams in her girl's heart which would make that heart ache for many a day after; did not trouble him—or rather, if a sense of guilt did sometimes sting him, as he looked into the smiling face, uplifted in greeting to his, he crushed it with a thought of Maysie. And yet, it seemed as if the further he advanced in the girl's good graces, the less probable it seemed that she would help him. Once or twice he brought a letter in his pocket, to ask her to deliver it secretly. But some frank look in her eyes, some little joyous note in her laugh, would suddenly make the request impossible—for that day, at least. They always gave him the ridiculous fancy that to ask it, was like trying to make some innocent child do wrong.

But he always went to meet her again. He was even chaffed by one or two of his friends, who had happened to meet him with the "pretty governess." The meetings filtered through various manly conversations, till they began to reach the ears of one or two women of Mrs. Englefield's acquaintance; and an opportunity only was wanted to tell that lady herself of her governess's goings on.

Yet all Jack Aylmer's exertions to please so insignificant a member of his acquaintance seemed wasted, at least for the purpose he had intended. One night, at a ball, about three weeks after Maysie's engagement, he managed to put a note into her own hand himself. What was more to the point, she took it.

The next day happened to be Miss Coleridge's monthly holiday. She had no friends in London, except an old maiden lady, a great invalid, and she always spent this day with her. This old lady had a settled conviction that no lady ought ever

to be out after dark, the result of which fixed opinion was that Miss Coleridge was always sent off home about seven. She had never once been later than eight o'clock in returning. But this evening she had an appointment. Lady Arundel was leaving the country for always. She was a voluntary exile, for the sake of the motherhood which she had dishonoured. She had begged Miss Coleridge to come to her, that she might hear the last news she would ever have of her lost child. The interview was a long one, and it was quite half-past ten when Miss Coleridge reached the house in Grosvenor Walk. To her astonishment she found the door ajar. It was careless, for the lovely June night had attracted all sorts of people into the streets, and there were none of the servants about the hall. In fact, they were all enjoying themselves in their various quarters, "the family" being out, with the exception of Maysie, who had pleaded a severe headache, and begged to be left at home. She really looked ill, and her mother noticed for the first time how thin she had grown during the last month. Lord Maitland was returning to-morrow. It would never do for him to find that she had fallen off since her engagement, and perhaps suspect that she had been "fretting" for some one else. So her mother consented.

About twelve o'clock, Mrs. Englefield and her second daughter were driving home from the reception they had attended after their dinner-party. They had dropped Mr. Englefield at his club, and had picked up a friend at another house. This friend was an elderly spinster, and cousin of Lord Maitland. In theory, Mrs. Englefield hated her, as did most people; in practice, she loaded her with attentions, as did most people also. For, in addition to her wealth and social position, she had a tongue for scandal and venom, which Society dreaded like a lash. She was also of an economical frame of mind, and liked to save her horses as well as her money.

Mrs. Englefield, little suspecting what she was entailing upon herself for that civility, had offered to drive her this night. She was particularly anxious to stand well with the Honourable Miss Malet, all the more so, because she had strongly opposed her cousin's engagement to Maysie Englefield. To oblige her, Mrs. Englefield had come away from the reception rather early, and Laura Englefield, who had been enjoying herself extremely, was very cross—so cross, indeed, that she even required sundry

warning touches in the carriage from her mother's foot, to remind her that she was to be civil to the Honourable Miss Malet. Unable to give vent to her feelings, she nestled down into her corner of the brougham, and consoled herself by thinking over the new acquaintance she had made, and parting from whom had caused her such grief.

He was a rich young American, who had just risen like a sun of gold upon the horizon of London Society. Laura was not the only girl that night, who went home with eyes fairly dazzled by his golden rays, which not even his decidedly curious, not to say plebeian name, could dim—Mr. Silas B. Bunthorp.

But Society scorned such a trifle as a name, when it hailed from New York, and was touched with the splendour of that colossal fortune, which Mr. Silas B. Bunthorp was spending so royally. Society scarcely even troubled to find out that personally he was of far greater value than his fortune. Perhaps Mrs. Englefield was also thinking of him, for he had shown symptoms of being taken by Laura's fresh beauty. The Honourable Miss Malet was certainly thinking of him, as she commented freely upon the scandalous way in which women rushed after every man who had a little money. But she kept, at the same time, a lynx eye upon the streets and the people passing to and fro in the gaslight. She had several times surprised some very interesting scandals by so doing. Suddenly the words died on her lips, and with a startled exclamation, which had a note of cheerful triumph in it, she clutched Mrs. Englefield's arm:

"Look!" she exclaimed.

A young man and a girl were standing on the edge of the pavement waiting for a hansom, which was drawing up. The next second the brougham had swept past.

"That young scamp, Jack Aylmer! There's no mistaking him anywhere! And your governess! I always said she was too pretty to be any good. I only heard to-day that they are always about together."

Mrs. Englefield, at that first sharp explanation, had also leant forward. She sank back into her corner again, as the brougham rolled on. The movement was not fashionable languor or indifference. It was the complete prostration of her being—mental and physical. Her face was as white as a sheet, and her lips were trembling.

Happily the Honourable Miss Malet

was too triumphantly scandalised to notice her condition, but continued to pour out indignation, advice, reproof, exhortation, till Mrs. Englefield felt like a person standing defenceless before a deadly hail-storm of bullets, only, with quivering flesh, living through it all.

They dropped the Honourable Miss Malet at last, Mrs. Englefield knowing that, before she had been in the house half-an-hour, all the guests at the entertainment going on there, would be acquainted with Jack Aylmer's last escapade.

She ordered the carriage to drive home, though she and Laura were due at another place. Laura, who had been completely aroused from her ill-temper and golden dreams, broke out again to her mother as they drove off:

"Just fancy, Miss Coleridge—"

"Hold your tongue!" Her mother turned on her so fiercely that the girl shrank back terrified. "If ever you breathe a word of this, or ask any questions, I will turn you out of doors. If Maysie has disgraced us, are you going to blazon abroad our shame?"

"Maysie! Oh, mother!" Then Laura sank back, silenced, stunned—the striking resemblance between Maysie and Miss Coleridge explaining all.

Mrs. Englefield went straight to her daughter's room on her return. Something in her voice, made Maysie afraid to delay, though she had only just time to thrust out of sight the disguise of Miss Coleridge's poor little shabby ulster and hat, which she had taken from her wardrobe. She had not expected her mother in so soon that night, and had only been in herself, about ten minutes. The hansom coming straight, and driving with all the speed that Aylmer's freely-spent money could inspire, had outstripped the carriage which had driven the Honourable Miss Malet first to her destination. The butler, coming into the hall just after she had let herself in, saw her running up the staircase, and, on his return to the housekeeper's room, remarked that Miss Coleridge, for a wonder, was late.

Caught red-handed, Maysie could but confess. Jack Aylmer, in the letter he had given her the evening before, had prayed her, by all the old love, to grant him an interview. Inspired perhaps by a reckless spirit of adventure, perhaps, indeed, by that old love itself, which was the deepest feeling her shallow heart had ever known, Maysie had gone to his

chambers. He had told her that he should wait in all that day in case a message came from her. She had thought herself safe enough. Her own people would not be home till late, or, rather, early in the morning. A few minutes with him, and then she would be home again. But she had stayed longer than she intended. The parting—for she left Jack Aylmer no doubt as to what the interview was to be—was hard for her as well as for him.

Mrs. Englefield, filled with fury against Jack Aylmer, yet felt that there was one redeeming touch in the whole mad escapade. He had been as shocked at the girl's reckless folly, as even she, the mother, was, and had done his best to shield her from observation. As far as Mrs. Englefield could know for certain, no one had seen her, but the Honourable Miss Malet, who thought it was Miss Coleridge.

Even Mrs. Englefield was forced to remember that Aylmer's provocation had been great, and that he had acted like a gentleman, in spite of that foolish letter he had written.

But for Miss Malet, the whole might have been kept quiet. But she had seen, as she supposed, Miss Coleridge, and Miss Coleridge must bear the brunt of Maysie's sin. Yet it was hard. The girl was good, and her fair reputation was her living. But it was impossible to keep her in the house after that. General surprise and disapproval would lead to questionings, which might end in the fatal truth being brought to light. Mrs. Englefield lay awake all night, wondering how it was to be done. It was not easy to bring such an accusation home to Miss Coleridge, who was known never to be out after eight. She said nothing to her husband. He was a selfish, good-natured man, who never troubled himself much about domestic affairs; but she felt that he would feel this keenly, and probably spoil all by his unreasoning wrath.

A chance word of her maid's the next morning solved the difficulty. Miss Margaret had been frightened the evening before, and she had gone to sit with her; and so had been unable to finish her mistress's tea-gown. Miss Margaret had heard a noise in the passage outside, where Miss Coleridge's wardrobe stood. But it must have been only fancy, for when she (the maid) came, there was no one there. No, Miss Coleridge did not hear, because she was not in. She did not come in till very late. Brooks, the butler, had seen her entering about twelve o'clock, or it

might have been a little later, and had even made a remark about her being so late.

CHAPTER V.

A LITTLE later, Miss Coleridge was summoned from the school-room to Mrs. Englefield's room. She went happily enough, for it was the day on which her salary was due, and she was looking forward to buying a pretty summer dress. She was even wearing a rose in the belt of her dress, one of a bouquet which Jack Aylmer had given to Maggie the day before. When she came out of the room again there was a look in her eyes which even Mrs. Englefield had not cared to meet.

At first, when the accusation was brought against her, she had broken into indignant denials. When asked to explain where she had been, she had flushed, looked consciously troubled, and declined to reply; but as she saw how her silence gave a colouring to the accusation, she said that she had been to see Lady Arundel. Mrs. Englefield seized upon the confession as a godsend. A girl who would visit such an abandoned woman was capable of anything. Her indignation and eloquence were really grand, until they came suddenly to a full and discomfited stop.

Miss Coleridge, half-stunned at first and unable to utter anything but those broken indignant denials, had begun to understand.

"Mrs. Englefield," she broke in upon the virtuous torrent with something in her face which crushed Mrs. Englefield into that ignominious silence, "I see—you know that I did not do that. Mr. Aylmer knows it; your daughters know it. But you all know that I am innocent, and yet you accuse me of a thing, which, as far as my future is concerned, is my death-blow. No one will take me as a governess now, though my daily bread depends on it. But someone has to be sacrificed, and you are sacrificing me. If you did not, all the world to-morrow would know that your daughter is not a fit wife for Lord Maitland. If it is any satisfaction for you, I will go away at once. I don't think it is to save you that I keep silence. I think it is because I despise you all so heartily, that it is not worth my while to justify myself."

The next second she had left the room, leaving the woman of the world—the haughty, virtuous matron—silenced, humbled to the dust. It was sometime before

even she could face the world, with the same self-complacent dignity as before.

And so Miss Coleridge vanished for ever from the great house in Grosvenor Walk.

CHAPTER VI.

It was three years later. The London season had come round again. Town was beginning to fill with pretty débütantes, whose society-life was just opening, while those of past seasons, who had anchored themselves in safe matrimonial waters, prepared to go through the usual round of dancing, dressing, and visiting. Some of these latter came up to town all fresh for it again. Among these was Laura, a rich brewer's wife since the last spring; others found a great monotony in the eternal round of gaieties, which, after all, were always the same, and looked enviously at the pretty girls, who were so happy and eager for the life that was but beginning for them. Among these rather bored ones, was Lady Maitland. She felt that life was a disappointment, and that she ought to have been a Duchess. There were others of the opposite sex also given to moralising.

"It is disgustingly monotonous, this eternal beginning of the same old thing," said Jack Aylmer, turning out of the Park, this March afternoon. The Row was already full of familiar faces. He had seen some very pretty girls, who were to be presented immediately, as a preparatory rite for the new life. But none of them had quite pleased his fastidious taste. There was something lacking in their eyes, or complexion, just as there was always something lacking in the conversation of every woman he spoke to now. The thought of going through another season, with only those insipid beauties to amuse him, was depressing. He never enjoyed himself now as he used to, yet, to-day, he had more conditions for enjoyment in his favour. To-day he was prosperous; he bore the stamp of a man who could do something, and the world treated him accordingly.

Just a week after Maysie's marriage, his friends—after a common fashion of friends—came forward and "did something for him," which, two months before, would have given him unalloyed happiness. The delay of two months was the drop of bitterness which is the alloy in all earth's good fortunes.

"Just my confounded luck!" he had commented upon the fact. Yet, it was a

curious thing, it was not Maysie's loss which had provoked the sudden anger. Perhaps her marriage had been the death-blow of his love. Perhaps it was the shameful sacrifice which had been made to bring it about, which slew it. When he found out what had been done, he became furious. His first impulse was to rush into the world, and proclaim Miss Coleridge's innocence on the house-tops. But, as Mrs. Englefield explained to him, to save one girl, the other must be sacrificed, and surely it was better that Miss Coleridge, who was a mere nobody, should be, than Maysie. He could not see it clearly, yet Mrs. Englefield, whose arguments were the embodiment of Society wisdom, found some sort of response in his own brain. Sick to the heart with the dishonour of the sacrifice, furious at the thought of the suffering of the innocent girl, he yet saw no way out of it. For it was as hard to incur the risk of disgracing Maysie, as he saw plainly enough that he should, as to let Miss Coleridge suffer. He did make one attempt to save her, by trying to deny to the Honourable Miss Malet that it was Miss Coleridge whom she had seen. "If it were not she, it was Maysie Englefield," she had said, and he was silenced. But the Honourable Miss Malet began to suspect the truth. She kept, however, the knowledge to herself, for the present at least, either to spare her cousin—the marriage having taken place—or to use, as a rod in pickle for Maysie and her mother in future, should they prove troublesome. And a day did come, when she used her weapon, and Society found out that it had been too hasty in its conclusions. But in three years the world had quite forgotten anything so insignificant as the little governess: only one or two of her own friends knew that she had gone to America, where some lady had found her a capital engagement. It was the old lady who owned the parrot, and who had happened to make the girl's acquaintance just at the time of her trouble. She had been forbidden to write to Maggie, and the same restrictions had been put on Maggie. So, as Aylmer knew absolutely nothing of her own family or friends, he could get no information of her. Perhaps, it would be fairer to say that, after the first month or two, when he had gone half mad with the desire to find her, and tell her that he had had nothing to do with Mrs. Englefield's accusation, he had made no further attempt to communicate with her. For he made a

discovery just at that time, which was a very troublesome one, for a man in his position, to make. He knew perfectly well, this March day, why all other women had become uninteresting to him. He knew why the sight of a white rose would send a throb of intolerable pain to his heart. His cheek would flush hot and red, as if he felt it strike him again, flung at him in that half laughing, half disdainful scorn. He never went to a ball without thinking of two figures hiding away upstairs in the dark, watching; one of whom had "sweetest eyes were ever seen."

But he could think of other things too. If there had been a gulf between them before, it was still wider to day. Then he had been penniless, utterly unable to marry a poor girl. Now his very good fortune made it still more impossible. A foolish marriage would ruin him. He had already made a name for himself as a rising man. He might end in the Cabinet—now that he had a chance of a beginning. But he must not fetter himself for his upward march. To make a girl in Miss Coleridge's position, without connections, wealth, or influence, his wife, would be madness. Nay, who had not even—here he always flushed painfully—a blameless reputation. So he had struggled desperately against his love, therewith—though he was unconscious, perhaps, of it—struggling against all that was best and truest in his own nature. And in proportion as he silenced the love, so did cynical disbelief, selfish worldliness, cold indifference grow.

But there were still days when life seemed intolerable without her, and to-day was one. He turned his steps in the direction of the road where lived the parrot they used to go every morning to see. He had always thought it a dull street; to-day, it looked drearier than ever under an overcast sky. The east wind swept through the grey air in dry, cutting blasts, raising whirlwinds of dust.

Perhaps it was this cheerless greyness which made the sight of a woman coming down the steps of the house where the parrot lived, seem like a beatific vision. It was Miss Coleridge! Exactly as he had last seen her! No; there was a change. A change he felt, but could not define. Perhaps it was her dress. She turned at the same moment, and saw him. At the sight of her face, which flushed hotly, and then greeted him with the gladdest smile he had ever seen on a girl's face, all his doubts, all his fear of ridicule, all his

worldly wisdom vanished. She loved him, and he loved her. Was not that enough?

"I thought I was never going to see you again," he said, wondering how he could speak so steadily with her little hand in his.

"I have been away a long time," she said, withdrawing her hand quietly as she spoke. In some subtle way he felt the change in her manner, as he felt the change in her appearance, without really understanding either. Perhaps her manner was more self-possessed, or rather colder, for she had always had the charm of self-possession, while it may have been the dress of costly furs and velvet which so heightened her beauty, and gave it the last touch she needed. She used to be rather dowdy and old-fashioned.

"I have been in New York," she said, making no demur to-day at his walking with her.

"What have you been doing in New York?" he asked, wondering if it were there that she had learned to dress so well.

"Teaching and learning," she said with an odd little smile, which somehow seemed to place him at a disadvantage, as if she were laughing at him.

"Learning what?"

"Oh, a great many things—how to be happy, for one."

"You look happy," he said, looking down at her with a sudden start of jealousy, forgetting how ill it became him, whose life had been of late so fair and easy, to grudge this poor hardworking governess the happiness which he had never attempted to get for her.

"I am happy," she said gravely. "Everybody was so good to me over there."

"Ah, yes!" with infinite bitterness, remembering how they had treated her here. "Not like—"

"Hush!" she exclaimed, "Don't let us talk of that. I think I have quite got over it. Everybody I care for, knows I am innocent—and why should I trouble?" Her face flushed, and there was a very happy light in her eyes as they looked away from him, far down the straight, grey road, which said so plainly that there was no more fear left in her life. The flushing face and averted eyes told him their own tale. Of course he knew that she was innocent. That was enough for her. "And Maggie still cares for me," she said, as he did not speak, withdrawing her eyes from that far-off vision. "I only arrived in

town yesterday, and I met her in the afternoon. She had not forgotten me. I was so glad to see one or two of my old friends again, before we go on to Paris, to-morrow."

So she was going away at once again, in the service of the people with whom she was living. Oh! she should not live another day of such hateful drudgery when he had a home to give her.

"Miss Coleridge," he said hoarsely, stopping unconsciously and facing her, "I behaved like a scoundrel once. I feel that nothing can atone for the suffering we caused you; but if my whole life can be some sort of expiation—"

"Mr. Aylmer!" she gasped in bewilderment.

"You must not think of me. I know your generous, unselfish heart. You think that my wife ought to be—but what do I care for wealth or position? I love you—and only want you. I have loved you all along. I have thought of you every day. Life will be desolate without you. You used to like me a little. I know you like me to-day. I read it in your eyes, and—darling—say you will be my wife, and I will give your life everything it lacks to make it happy and full of ease. If it costs me—"

"Oh, but I can't!" she exclaimed, breaking in upon his eager pleading, her face pale with shocked pity, as his was with passion; and yet with a touch of laughter in her eyes, such as angels might laugh, so free from malice it was. "I do like you, but I never cared for you in that way, and—really—my life is as happy as it can be; and—and—I am Mrs. Silas B. Bunthorp."

A gust of that chill, biting wind swept up the dreary street, whirling up a cloud of grey dust between them. When it cleared away, Jack Aylmer had realised that he had chosen too late, and that he was to face the new London season once more—alone.

LIFEBOAT WORK.

THERE are many pleasanter promenades than that under Limehouse Wall, with a black tidal water on one hand, and on the other a row of dismal sheds and hoardings. An aged, solitary man drags a black, decrepit barge through the sluggish waters, as if he were doing penance for the misdeeds of a former existence; otherwise there is nothing to be seen along the cindery, watery waste, nor anything to

be heard except the roar and rattle of railway trains all round. All the more strange and unexpected is the appearance at a distance of a flotilla of boats of a quite festive appearance, all white and light blue, that cast a brightness over the sombre water-way, on which they ride with a corky buoyancy, quite unusual in the craft that usually come this way. With stems and sterns high out of the water, they suggest triumphal galleys, or the long ships of our Saxon forefathers; but nearer inspection shows what they actually are—so many life-boats, recently launched from the yard of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. In the yard itself lie other life-boats, high and dry, and in various stages of equipment. Here, one that has just put on its first coat of paint; and there, a veteran which has come back to its birthplace, after who can say what experience of storm and shipwreck, of wild seas and roaring winds, with hope shining from the depths of despair, and joyful rescue from the darkness of impending death!

Who can say, indeed? And yet, if we had our lifeboat reports by heart, we might by the very name of the boat tell whence she came and what service she had seen. For the names are not given haphazard, but generally represent the names of those who give or bequeath the funds to build the boat. And what better monument could anyone require—that, being dead, his name or hers might still be preserved in the gratitude of souls rescued from the grave?

But now we are more concerned with the boats of the future, which are lying here already equipped—sails, masts, oars, tackling of all kinds made fast and yet readily accessible. Over them hangs a derrick with its tackle, and presently we may see them rolled over and over, tumbled this way and that, and always coming up bright and smiling, as if nothing in the way of water could hurt them or keep them under.

These particular boats, too, are of a somewhat modified type, bearing certain improvements which experience has shown to be necessary. The ordinary lifeboat of the Society is familiar in appearance to everybody, and has done splendid service in its day. No perfect safety is possible in the face of the enormous forces of Nature displayed in storm and tempest. A boat that nothing could capsize would be a boat that nobody could row, or sail, or steer. But by so arranging the weights

and buoyancy of a boat that she will always right herself and clear herself of water, the utmost available security is provided. Each man of the lifeboat crew must put on his cork jacket and belt before he takes his place, and if he is turned out of the boat by a capsize, may hope to regain his place as the boat recovers herself. It is better still not to be capsized at all; and if stability were sacrificed to the self-righting principle, most practical men would say, let the latter go.

The record of the lifeboat of the past has been on the whole excellent. During some thirty-two years the boats of the Institution have been five thousand times on service, in all kinds of bad weather, and on every description of coast; and in all this service only thirty-nine capsizes occurred, of which sixteen only had been accompanied with loss of life. In all, fifty lifeboat men were drowned from this cause during that long term of service. Altogether, including all causes of disaster, seventy-eight men sacrificed their lives in the work of rescue. The result of the work itself was the saving of twelve thousand souls from drowning.

But a most sad disaster has inspired a certain amount of mistrust in the existing type of lifeboat. The disaster made a great impression at the time; but things are so soon forgotten, that the story of it may well be briefly retold, for it is a story that should live in people's memories.

On the ninth of December last, a heavy gale was blowing on the western coasts of our islands. It had come upon us with less than usual of premonitory symptoms, and before its close not fewer than a hundred vessels had met with wreck or disaster. A large barque, the "Mexico," of Hamburg, had just sailed from Liverpool outward bound, and was driven by the gale into the dangerous labyrinth of sands and shoals which encumber the mouth of the broad estuary of the river Ribble. As a last resort her anchors were let go off the town of Southport; but they did not hold her long, and as night closed in she was seen drifting with the tide along the shore, among the wild surf that no ordinary boat would live in.

The progress of the embayed ship had been eagerly watched from the shore, and when her rockets and signals of distress announced that she had finally stranded, the Southport lifeboat crew assembled, and the boat was drawn by horses along

the shore to a point opposite the shoal on which the barque was lying. The lifeboat was successfully launched, and made her way towards the wreck.

In the meantime the vessel's signals of distress had been seen from the opposite shore of the estuary; from Lytham, where there is a small harbour and a lifeboat station; and from Stanner Point, generally known as St. Ann's, where there are a couple of lighthouses and another lifeboat station. No time was lost at either of these stations, the boats were manned and launched; and thus, in the darkness of that December night, help was coming to the shipwrecked crew from three distinct quarters. Although the distance from Lytham to the wreck was much greater than from the Southport beach, yet the boat from the former station was far better placed for reaching the wreck. She had the wind abeam both going and returning, and she reached the stranded vessel, rescued the crew, and got safely back to Lytham without seeing anything of the other boats. It was a splendid service gallantly performed.

The Southport boat had a far different fate. She had reached to windward of the wreck and her anchor had just been thrown out, when a great green sea swept over her and capsized her. The boat did not right herself, but drifted on towards the shore. Some of her crew were entangled underneath the boat, others clung to her sides; the sea was awful, the cold intense; one by one dropped away, and when the boat at last grounded in shallow water, only two of the poor fellows had sufficient life left in them to struggle ashore. The boat from St. Ann's fared even worse. Nothing was heard of her till the following morning, when she was found bottom upwards on the beach. All her crew had perished. Thus twenty-seven lives had been sacrificed on this one wild night, and the whole district was plunged in grief.

It is to be noticed that along the coast where the disaster happened, the along-shore population are especially brave and eager to assist in the work of rescue. There is no difficulty in manning the life-boat, double the number of volunteers required generally offer themselves. But it is to be feared that the lot of fishermen and boatmen during the long months of winter is often a hard one. The crew of the St. Ann's boat was physically not a strong one. The coxswain was suffering

from consumption, one of the other heroes had hardly broken his fast all the day, before setting out for this grim and deadly struggle with the elements. It is a story altogether that deserves to be written in letters of gold and recorded on some public monument, for nothing more simply heroic than the conduct of these poor half-nourished fishermen was ever told in ancient or modern story. Then the disaster has its bright side, and also in the general sympathy and sorrow that was felt all over the world—a sympathy that made itself felt in the best possible way by providing for those left desolate by the loss. If any of those brave fellows in his last moments felt that the bitterest pang of death was the trouble of those he left behind, he might have been consoled by the assurance that he had left them a good inheritance in the sympathy of his fellow creatures.

Quick and ample was the response to the appeal for help for those who had been dependent on the men who had lost their lives in this noble service. All through the country and into foreign lands spread the story of the lifeboat crews, and from every side funds came pouring in. An eloquent appeal from the "Daily Telegraph" brought in over six thousand pounds, and the funds speedily amounted to nearly thirty thousand pounds.

Bat the experience of that terrible night, with the fact of two boats capsized and failing to right themselves—for that seems to be the only probable explanation of the disaster to the St. Ann's boat—raised the grave question as to whether existing lifeboats are fully adapted to all the services required of them. No other model indeed has been found to fulfil the tests and conditions imposed by the nature of the service. But the attention of the Institution had been drawn, before the disaster, to the desirability of increasing the stability of the established model. The Lytham lifeboat, which successfully performed the service in which the two other boats succumbed, is described by the Commissioners who inquired into the disaster, as "far the better boat of the three;" a new boat, fitted with water-ballast tanks amidships, which can be filled in one minute, as soon as the boat is in a sufficient depth of water, and which can be pumped out in the same space of time. And we are assured that the increased stability thus secured also in-

creases the boat's self-righting power. An improved position for the air-tight caissons is also a feature of the new boat. Nor is the Institution content with replacing the old model by the new, as the boats are required to be renewed; they are fitting water-ballast tanks to all their boats, as far as means will permit.

A new departure, too, in lifeboats, is the use of a sliding keel, or centre board as it used to be called; and some specimens of this kind of boat were among the most interesting to be found under Limehouse Wall. The sliding keel has been adopted to meet the requirements of practical seamen, who want a more weatherly boat in sailing to windward; for the less the oars are resorted to, the less the strain upon the crew and the less the danger they incur.

And this suggests another direction in which invention may be busy. A motive power to be applied to lifeboats is a great desideratum, although, probably, the solution of the difficulty lies a good way in the future. As it is, with a harbour to start from and steam power to take her to the scene of danger, the range of a lifeboat's services may be widely increased. The services of the Ramsgate lifeboat, for instance, are far greater than those of other stations in the neighbourhood, partly owing to these advantages. Gorleston lifeboat performs many more services than Yarmouth, aided by the advantage of the harbour mouth; and the like may be said of every boat that hails from a sea-port, although as steam-tugs are generally private property, and not run on philanthropic principles, their aid is often unavailable. The Trinity Board, one would think, might help in this matter if they chose—they have plenty of steam power for one purpose or another. And that brings us to another consideration which invites attention.

It is generally admitted that telegraphic communication is very desirable between the different lifeboat stations taken in groups, as serving the same part of the coast. In the case of the wreck of the "Mexico," already alluded to, had the three stations which sent assistance been in telegraphic communication, the one from its position best adapted to perform the service, which was clearly Lytham, would have communicated with the two other stations, and the unfortunate loss of life would in all probability have been averted. Some arrangement would be necessary

among the members of a group—in the way of choosing a chief coxswain of the district, preferably by the crews concerned, one in whose seamanship and knowledge of the coast all had confidence, whose decision as to the boat and crew best fitted for the service must be implicitly obeyed.

Some progress has already been made in the matter of communication. The various lightships, whose instrumentality is of the greatest value in giving information of wrecks or ships in distress within their limits, are now being connected by telegraph with light stations on shore. But this is a matter undertaken by the Trinity Board, a wealthy and well-endowed Corporation, with powers of levying dues on the shipping within its jurisdiction. It would be impossible for the Lifeboat Institution to carry out telegraphic communication between its stations. That is a matter that only the Government could undertake, and considerable pressure would be necessary before the Chancellor of the Exchequer could be brought to incur the expense.

In the meantime it would not be difficult to establish communication between stations not far distant by means of flash signals—on the Morse principle of dots and dashes, as represented by long and short flashes—such as are now adopted in the army and navy; but these would be unavailable in thick weather, and would at other times require signallers who had been well trained in the art, while the simple A B C telegraph could be managed by the merest novice who could read and write.

But after all there is no country in the world which can boast of such a service as ours for saving life from shipwreck, manned by volunteers, and supported by voluntary contributions. Nor has any other age or time ever shown such an example of willing devotion in the case of poor fishermen and boatmen whose dangers in the way of their daily calling are apparently grave, and who earn but a scanty subsistence with much toil and suffering. And the country owes it to them that nothing shall be spared to furnish the best appliances and materials for saving life. It owes it also to the seamen who risk their lives daily around our dangerous coast, that the best kind of help should be always at hand. The Lifeboat Institution has taken up this national duty, which else would have been left unperformed, and for the past fifty years it has nobly carried out its purpose. But

the yearly sacrifice of life along our coasts is still frightful. In 1866 the Institution's lifeboats saved over six hundred lives; but as many, if not more, were lost. Every gale of any severity strews our shores with wrecks and the sands with the bodies of the drowned. All this is set forth in the annual report of lifeboat work.

Simple is the record, and yet full of unpretentious heroism, if you can read between the lines, and realise what it means to put out to sea in an open boat in the teeth of a howling gale on a dark winter's day or night, to toil for hours at the oar, with the full chance of a watery grave to end your trouble. It is a service money could not buy, and yet it is freely rendered by the boatmen and fishermen of our coasts.

Here is a specimen taken at random from the report: "Padstow.—Shortly after midnight, on the sixteenth October, the lifeboat was launched, a messenger on horseback having arrived from Trevose Head, and reported that a vessel was showing signals of distress to the eastward of Gullan. A terrific gale was blowing from the N.N.W., with a high breaking sea. The vessel proved to be the barque "Alliance," of Risør, Norway, timberladen from Halifax, N.S., for Glasgow. In making for the harbour she had been driven to leeward by the heavy seas, having lost some of her sails, and stranded on the Doom-bar Sands. Seven of her crew were rescued by the lifeboat, four others unfortunately having been drowned before the boat reached the ship." Well done, Cornwall! and this, be it remembered, on a coast which, according to the old saying, was "a watery grave by day or night." Equally gallant service might be chronicled all round the coast, from Caithness to the Lizard.

Terrible, too, in the view of what shipwreck implies, is the wreck chart of the United Kingdom as shown in the report of the Board of Trade. This is dotted all over with black spots, each of which signifies a casualty; at places the wrecks cluster like flies, and rank in serried lines. Not that these are to be taken altogether as signs of any especial dangers of navigation. The more pitchers to the well the more broken crockery, and where are the great tideways of commerce, there will be the wrecks most thickly gathered. But the whole east coast shows a dismal record of black spots; still, it is also bright with the red marks of lifeboat stations. The most

terrible place for wrecks seems to be the Bristol Channel, within whose yawning jaws whole fleets of vessels are brought to destruction. The Mersey is singularly free from wrecks, although the adjoining estuary of the Dee and the coasts round about owe some of their black marks to Liverpool, no doubt. The mouth of the Clyde has a terrible array of wrecks. All the western isles and the serrated coasts of West Scotland are dotted with wrecks, and here there are no lifeboat stations, according to the map, from the Mull of Cantyre right away to Duncansby Head. But there are two lifeboats on the Orkney Isles, where, as well as the Shetlands, the coast is dotted all over with wrecks.

The west coast of Ireland, too, is alarmingly bare of lifeboats. True, there is no great coasting trade to swell the list of wrecks, and ships in general give the coast a wide berth. Yet Galway has its wrecks ; and so also has the Shannon shore; but not a lifeboat is there between Tralee and Aranmore.

In truth, there is no use in placing lifeboats where there is no seafaring population on the coast to man them. It is the true and manly sympathy of those who dwell along our coasts with all who are in danger from storm and shipwreck, that is the real strength of our lifeboat system. And the knowledge that help is sure to be forthcoming, if human help be possible, nerves the shipwrecked seaman to battle with the elements to the last.

The National Lifeboat Institution, with its long and intimate connection with the seafaring population, and its varied experience of the real necessities of the service, is also, everybody will be glad to see, fully alive to the duty of making all its appliances as perfect as may be. And this is mainly a question of funds, which surely will never be wanting as long as we retain our appreciation of true courage and devotion such as are exhibited on any stormy night by our gallant lifeboat crews.

THE HERONS' POOL.

In the April morn of shine and shade,
In the hidden dell the children played,
Where the snowdrop nodded its fairy head,
The primrose peeped from its mossy bed,
And the lily leaves lay broad and cool,
On the quiet breast of the Herons' Pool.

'Neath the chestnut boughs in the glow of noon,
When the roses laughed all hail to June,
The youth and the maiden sought the spot,
Where thickest grew the forget-me-not,
Where love and life held royal rule,
As the troth was plighted by the Herons' Pool.

When October's fiery finger lay
On oak and ash in the woodland way,
One came alone with the faltering tread
That seeks the place where the loved lie dead,
To strive a passionate heart to school
By the memories shrined at the Herons' Pool.

Where the snow lay thick in drift and wreath,
A strong man strode down the lonely path ;
He saw how the ice lay chill and bare
Where the lilies had blossomed white and fair.
"Her sorrows are gone like the flowers, poor fool!"
He sighed, as he turned from the Herons' Pool.

A MUSICAL MEDLEY.

WHAT is the origin of harmony as distinguished from melody ? I cannot tell you, any more than I can tell you where the pointed arch came from, whether it was brought from the East, or whether it arose from the intersecting of romanesque arcades. Both harmony and the pointed arch began at much the same time; that is, if they are right who think that the Greeks, in spite of all their elaborate musical system, and their Dorian, and Phrygian, and half-a-dozen other measures, knew nothing of harmony ; that their choruses were sung in unison ; and that it was the same with the Jewish Temple chants, in which two sets of singers answered one another antiphonally. Our oldest extant tune, the Northumbrian round, "sumer is icumen in," is harmonised for four voices ; but then it only dates from early in the thirteenth century, and we want to go a great deal farther back than that. How about our possible ancestors in what Gibbon calls "the northern hive," the Uzbeck Tartars ? Those Bokhara singing boys, of whom the Emir is so fond, have they got any inkling of the rudiments of harmony ? Then there are the Chinese, who invented everything ; but, though Amiot, and Barrow, and others have written on Chinese music, no one seems to know anything very definite about it. One says they do not care for combinations, only for simple sounds, splitting up their music, as they do their language, into monosyllables. "Their melodies," grumbles the French Jesuit Amiot (1776), "have the character of an aimless wandering among sounds." On the other hand, Gladisel, a German savant, lately dead, thinks the Chinese music as deeply philosophical as that of Pythagoras ; but he does not tell us whether or not the Celestials are harmonists. Their oldest scale, by the way, consists of five tones, from F to D, omitting the B. F they call "emperor," G "prime minister, A "loyal subject," and so on, showing the close con-

nection which they have evolved between music and the Constitution ; and yet the invention is not attributed to an Emperor, but to the mythical bird "Fung Hoang" and his mate ; he invented the whole, she the half-tones.

Their musical instruments are quaint. There is the giant drum, half as high again as a man ; and there are musical stones—sixteen T squares of different sizes hung in two rows ; and there is the cheng, a hollow pumpkin with a spout, which looks just like a kitchen kettle but is filled with one or two dozen bamboo reeds. The player blows through the spout and manages with his hands the tops of the reeds.

Hindoo music is better known than Chinese ; Sir W. Jones, a century ago, told how the "Gopis" (nymphs) of Madura invented each a musical scale, each hoping thereby to win for herself the love of the young god Krishna. One of these scales (the Carnati) corresponds exactly, we are told, with the old Highland Scotch scale (B and F being omitted) ; but when there are (even after modern reductions) thirty-six of them, no wonder that some are identical with scales in other parts of the world. Still there is nothing about Hindoo harmony in Sir W. Jones.

How about Egypt, the land of music, where, figured on the walls of tombs and temples we have huge twenty-six stringed harps, and where the water-parties, at certain sacred feasts, going from one city to another, with much jollity, and roaring, rattling choruses, delighted Herodotus ? Were their choruses harmonised, and the endless litanies which were sung in their temples ? If somebody, now, could unroll a papyrus music-book, and interpret it ! But nobody has done so, and all we know is that Herodotus was astonished to find the old dirge : "Woe's me for Linus," which came to Greece from Phœnicia, used as a lament for Osiris in the land of the Pharaohs. In Lane's book on Modern Egypt are several tunes which may or may not have come down from early times. Anyhow, they have got mixed with Arabian music ; it is higher up the Nile, and in Abyssinia (the old *Æthiopia*), that, if anywhere, we are likely to find the old Egyptian melodies. Harmonists, however, it is plausibly argued, these old Egyptians must have been. Music with them was clearly a science. There is a gradual improvement in their instruments, judged by the pictures ; and then, as in other things, comes a quick decline. At no

time can one imagine an orchestra of harps, guitars, lyres, flutes, and drums, played all at once, merely to strengthen the melody ; the compass would have been too large. There can scarcely be a doubt that the accompaniment was not in unison, but was harmonised. And, if so, we may be pretty sure that the Jews learnt harmony in Egypt, and did not forget it when they got into Canaan. They would take the secular tetrachord, or scale of four notes, and also that of seven notes, which in Egypt specially belonged to the priests ; but whether the Jerusalem temple-songs were harmonised, as Naumann assures us, or whether Sir F. Gore-Ouseley is right in saying that the old Jewish scales were incapable of being harmonised, who can tell ? Some say the Psalms of David were chanted to Gregorians ; anyhow, there are still certain tunes, among them the "Sch'ma Israel" ("Hear, O Israel"), and the song of Miriam, which must be very old, for they are the same in every synagogue from Poland to Lisbon. They closely resemble some of the antiphons in the Catholic service, and very probably formed the basis of the Ambrosian Chant.

What of Arab music ? A good deal of it is doubtless pre-Mahometan ; and, though the Muezzin sings his call, and the Dervishes dance to the music—not, as we should fancy, of wild tambourines and cymbals and drums, but of sweet, low flutes—the Arab music is far less connected with worship than the Hebrew. We know a good deal about it, not only from Lane's book, but from Félicien David, a Frenchman who, banished from Paris because he joined the St. Simonians, made his way to Constantinople, and thence to Egypt, travelling slowly back to France by way of North Africa, picking up at each stage the tunes, which he afterwards embodied in his cantata, "Le Désert," and other works. Meyerbeer, by the way, if he did not go to the Arabs for the watchman's song in the third act of "The Huguenots," proves what in modern jargon would be called "the homogeneity of the Semitic genius," for that song is just like the Koran recitative given by Lane.

There is no doubt that we owe our fiddles to the Arabs ; the Rebab (called Rebec by the Troubadours) was brought in by the Crusaders ; and the Arab lute is just a guitar, though the latter has kept the name, while wholly losing the shape of the old Greek cithara (harp).

I do not think that our music owes much to

old Greece. The Greeks, who were obliged to confess that their letters came from the East, claimed their music as home-grown. It was, like that of the Hindoo, mixed up with their mythology. One knows all about Hermes and the lyre, and Pan and his pipes. The myth preserved by Censorinus is the prettiest of all: Phoebus, hearing the musical twang of his sister's bow-string, set himself to think how that weapon might yield tones that should bring joy, and not death, to men. It is curious that the very earliest Egyptian harps are bow-shaped. Like the Jews, the Greeks began with the Egyptian tetrachord, to which Terpander is credited with having added three strings, and Pythagoras one more. Yet, though the Greeks developed the most elaborate musical systems, which are still the despair of commentators, and had their diatonic, enharmonic, and chromatic scales, to each of which they assigned a special moral value, the best authorities believe that they knew nothing of harmony. Music with them was always subordinated to poetry; with us, in our opera, the music is all important, the libretto is of little account; with them, in their plays, it was just the reverse. And yet they were strong believers in the power of melody. Orpheus tamed brutes, and led trees and rocks a dance; and Pythagoras sobered with solemn music a wild young fellow, who, in a fit of jealousy, was going to set his sweetheart's house on fire. The Germans think they have decyphered the music to one of Pindar's Pythian odes; but how much is "evolved out of the savant's inner consciousness," is always the sceptic's question in such cases. Mendelssohn claims, in the choruses of the "Antigone," to have reproduced the Greek rhythm; but who can tell? We do not rightly know how accent was managed, and how it differed from quantity. In their instruments the Greeks were far behind the Egyptians; they never attained to a finger-board, and therefore their lyres could only give as many notes as they had strings; and so, when Phrynis, famed for his flourishes and roulades, wanted to play in two keys without retuning, he had to add a ninth string. Poor fellow! when he went down to Sparta, the Ephors ruthlessly cut two of his strings. Sparta had grown great to the music of the old seven-stringed lyre; the whole Constitution would be upset if an upstart foreigner came fiddling on nine, instead of the orthodox number. In other parts, florid music was more

popular; a flute-player, Lamia, had a temple built to her some three hundred years B.C. She had been trained at Alexandria, and always went with the first Ptolemy on his campaigns. Demetrius, surnamed "city-stormer," son of Antigonus, another of Alexander's Generals, beat Ptolemy, and took Lamia prisoner; but her music so enraptured him, that he literally made a goddess of her in her lifetime.

To Rome, the modern musical world owes a vast deal more than it does to Greece; but whether we got harmony from Rome is another question. Boethius copied Ptolemy's scales into his book on music; but he seems to have known nothing of counterpoint, that is, of harmony, of which some think the beginnings are to be found in the songs of "the hardy Norsemen."

Possibly; yet, if so, how can we account for the power which Church music exercised over the "Northern barbarians?" "How do you get such big congregations?" was a question put to a Catholic priest in New York. "It is the blessing of God on good music," he replied; and so it was with the Roman missionaries, their chanting was as great a help to them as the hymns are to the Salvation Army. Charlemagne was so delighted with Gregorians that he learnt them at Rome, and not only had them taught in all his schools, but he himself used to lead the choir at Aix, brandishing his staff at any one who sang a false note. In Ireland alone, the music was the least popular part of the new faith; it had the bards against it, and their complaints are embodied in those curious dialogues of Oisin (Ossian) and St. Patrick, in which the former contrasts "the hoarse booming of the clerics' hymns" with the joyous songs of the Feine.

The Church in the Roman Empire no doubt took many hints in regard to music from the heathen ritual. The historian Socrates tells how Ignatius, the martyr, saw in a vision the heavens opened, and heard the angelic choirs singing in alternate chants, which style he at once introduced into the churches of Antioch. At Rome itself the simplicity of the old Italian worship had given place to a mixture of all sorts of rituals—Syrian, Egyptian, Jewish, Phrygian; and endless litanies (pervigilia) at festival times were sung all night long in the temples. The Romans had organs, both pneumatic and hydraulic. Nero was specially fond of the latter, which, however, ceased to be used about the middle

of the fourth century, A.D. A fourth-century fresco represents a stage full of women singers with an organ at each wing, the bellows of which are worked by boys treading on them. Persistent tradition attributes to St. Celicia, martyred A.D. 177, the appropriation of the organ to religious uses; but it was two hundred years before a General Council—that of Laodicea—put a stop to congregational singing, and confined the singing in church to trained choirs. This was just about the time when, in the West, St. Ambrose had made or adopted the chant which goes by his name, and to which St. Augustine, who heard it at Milan, attributes his conversion. The Ambrosian Chant soon came to be used all over the West, and lasted on for two centuries, till the days of Gregory the Great.

The Church now began, too, to have a musical notation. The Greeks had used letters for notes—as they did for numerals—but St. Ephraim, a fourth-century Syrian monk, invented fourteen signs, some of them like our crotchets, which were called “neumes,”—a corruption of the Greek “pneuma” (breath), because one of their uses was to show the singer where to take breath. Joined together as they soon came to be, these signs look, in the MSS. that have come down to us, like a very puzzling system of shorthand. They were written above the words, as if they had been accents; and not till the tenth century was a red line, the ancestor of our stave, drawn between the two.

The Ambrosian Chant, like the Greek music on which it was probably based, was wholly governed by the words—was, in fact, a recitative depending on the length and quantity of syllables. The Gregorian forced the words to accommodate themselves to the tune, no easy task at times, as anyone may see by trying to chant verse thirty of Psalm lxviii. People differ about Gregorians, as they do about olives and caviare; when they like them, they like them very much. I once took a Low-Church parson to the Trappist Monastery at Grace Dieu on Charnwood Forest; we went in to vespers, but in about three minutes, he whispered: “I must go; I can’t stand it any longer; it’s like the howling of the damned.” The voices were all old, and some harsh; but I thought the general effect so good that I stayed to the end, anxious though I was to ask my friend how he had got his acquaintance with the music of the nether world.

If practice makes perfect, Gregorians, sung day and night in Monasteries, ought to be very near perfection. Some Monasteries got a special musical reputation, as some of our Cathedrals do nowadays. Chief among these was St. Gall in Switzerland, named after its founder, the Irish disciple of the Irish St. Columban, who stayed behind when his master pushed on into Italy and founded the still more famous Monastery of Bobbio. At St. Gall, about 912, flourished Notker, surnamed the Stammerer, who wrote new Gregorians, and anticipated Handel’s “*Harmonious Blacksmith*,” by setting “In the midst of life we are in death,” to notes which reproduced the hammering of workmen at a bridge over an Alpine gorge. Notker, too, modified and beautified the “Sequences,” an important part of the Mass service; his fellow monk, Tuotilo, improved the “*Kyrie*.” These bring us to Adam, of St. Victor’s Abbey near Paris, and Bernard of Clairvaux (middle of the twelfth century), and Thomas of Celano, who wrote the “*Dies irae*.” Meanwhile, of course, the instruments were improving. In the famous Utrecht Psalter, which contains the earliest transcript of the Athanasian Creed and is by many placed as early as the fifth century, is figured an organ with two players and four blowers, two on either side, whom the players are leaning over and scolding just as one sees done now at practising times.

About 1000 A.D., Pope Sylvester the Second greatly improved the organ; and during this same century part-singing began in church; but no one knows whether it was adopted from the folk-songs of the outside world, or hit upon by some monk, wearied out with the monotony of the never-ending chants, and driven wild by the false notes of the boys in the Monastery school. Sometime earlier, indeed, Hucbald, the Benedictine of St. Amand in Flanders, went in for part-singing. He, too, invented a new mode of musical notation. He used no notes, but marked the tone by the space in which he wrote the word or syllable corresponding to it. His music, therefore, has an uncanny appearance—fifteen lines enclose fourteen spaces; and while the *Do* of *Domini*, for instance, is, say in the fifth space, the rest of the word will be three or four spaces lower or higher.

A century later than Hucbald, Guido of Arezzo used both lines and spaces, going in also for part-singing, and inventing the

names of the notes. They are the first syllables of a six-line prayer to St. John that he will keep the singers from hoarseness :

Ut (now replaced by Do) queant laxis,
Re—sonare fibris
Mi—ra gestorum,
Fa—muli tuorum,
Sol—ve polluti

La—bri reatum, Sancte Johannes.

(That thy servants may be able with free throats to sing the wonders of thy deeds, do thou, holy John, unloose their sin-bound lips.) Here was the solfeggio complete ; and Guido had a way of helping his boys through what they called their " *crux et tormentum* " by arranging the scale on his finger-joints in a way which his pupils found so simple, that by it Pope John the Nineteenth learnt to sing at sight in one lesson ! This was a happy thing for Guido ; for he had been so misrepresented by his musical rivals that the Pope had called on him to give up his priorship of Avellana ; but, finding him so excellent an instructor, he reinstated him.

Franco of Cologne (about 1180), author of " *Compendium de Discantu*," brings us a step further. His laws of part-writing are in all essentials in use at the present day. *Discantus*, by the way, or *biscantus* (French, *déchant*), is a duet (a strange origin for our word *descant*) ; it soon came to be adorned in its upper notes with flourishes (*fleurettes*), and therefore the lower voice, which sang the *cantus firmus* (steady tune) was called *Tenor* (holding the air).

Music, too, began now to be written more in modern fashion. There were two styles—the square notes (black or open) still used in Catholic Church music, and the nail-and-horseshoe notation used in Germany and Belgium.

Meanwhile secular music had been going on briskly. There were the folk-songs, of which each Teutonic tribe had its own budget, and in which (to judge from Welsh and Irish and Highland) " the Celt " was by no means deficient ; and there was the music which the minstrels—a regular tribe, like the gipsies—carried from land to land. These jongleurs, menestriers, fableurs, in Italy called *cetetani*, are often wrongly confounded with the poets, troubadours, or minnesingers, frequently of noble birth, who at first employed them to sing their ballads. They were outcasts to whom the Church denied its sacraments, descendants (the Germans tell us) of the old Roman

comedians and gladiators, of whom there had been " schools " made up of all nationalities, and who, when their occupation was gone—thanks partly to Christianity, partly to the poverty caused by the barbarian invasions—wandered far and wide, carrying with them their tricks, and songs, and stories. To them is largely due the similarity of the popular tales over all Europe and Asia ; and there was probably a good deal of sameness, too, in the popular music. The same instruments, also, were widely diffused. Ask the average Englishman who invented the bagpipe ; he will tell you a Scotchman or an Irishman. Yet the sight of those Italian pifferari who have been about among us for the last dozen years might have taught him differently. In the Middle Ages, too, when as yet the harp was the national instrument of the Scot—whether in Scotia major (Ireland) or in Albany (Scotland)—the bagpipe was common in Yorkshire. It was, too, in use in Germany (whether with or without bellows), and it is found in Brittany and in Greece too, though there it certainly does not date from classical times.

Another time-honoured instrument is what the Church called *organistrum* (the old French name is " *retel* " or " *rutel* "), of which the hurly-gurdy is the degenerate descendant. In the ninth century it was very large, needing two performers, one to turn the crank, the other to manage the keys and bridges ; but before long its size was reduced, and it became what early writers on music call " the strolling woman's lyre." The Welsh " *crwth* " too (small harp, played with a bow), got widely known under the names of " *crotta* " or " *rotta* " ; and out of it and the Oriental " *rebab* " or " *rebec* " was shaped the modern violin. But I am not discussing the archaeology of fiddles. I have been trying to trace the growth of harmony and part-singing.

Somehow or other the folk-music of the thirteenth century is wholly free from the Church scale, and is built on our modern diatonic—using major and minor keys—major and minor thirds, for instance, which were rejected by pedants like Hucbald, who framed their scales on ill-understood Greek theories. And their instruments prove (like those of the Egyptians) that the lay people must have had some kind of harmony. The construction of the " *crwth* " proves this, unless, indeed, all its six strings were tuned in unison or octaves, which Sir F. Gore-Ouseley assures us they never were. The old Welsh,

therefore, knew something of harmony ; and granting this, we cannot deny the knowledge to their close kinsmen, the Irish and Scottish Gael ; and *Giraldus Cambrensis* is very emphatic on their part-singing. "The Britons," he says, "do not sing in unison like the people of other countries, but in different parts, so that as many parts are heard as there are singers, who all finally unite in consonance and organic melody." The duet, or descant, he speaks of as much practised north of the Humber, one singer holding the note (tenor), the other singing the upper in a soft and pleasing manner," and this kind of singing (rare in other parts of England) came in, he thinks, with the Danes.

Giraldus despised the Saxons so thoroughly that he does not tell us much about their singing ; but their gleemen are proverbial, and probably had made as much progress towards harmony as the Welsh. I believe we were always a musical nation, though probably more so in the North than elsewhere, just as in Alfred's time the learning of the country was nearly all confined to Northumbria. With our Continental Kings came in the newer minstrelsy which had been growing up in France and in Provence. France (the country north of the Loire) had its trouvères, Provence its troubadours—both courtly poets, who at first only wrote, but soon began also to sing and to accompany their own voices. In Germany they were called *Minne* (Love) singers ; and among them were Prince Witzlav and Walther of the Birdmeadow (*Vogelweide*) and Henry von Meissen, called *Frauenlob*, because of his constant praise of women, for which the sex were so grateful that the ladies of Mayence carried him to his grave, "which they watered with their tears and with the best of Rhineland wine."

As the music of these courtly singers passed down to the common people, its professors were, like all other mediæval professors, formed into guilds. Such were the German Meistersingers, whose guilds lasted on till quite lately ; Lorenz Chappuy, the violinist, (1838), belonged to one of them. They had each their court, according to the instrument they affected — the pipers being the most famous—with mayor, masters, members, and beadle. It was the same in France. The "Confrérie de St. Julien des Ménestriers" was the Paris guild, whose seal is dated 1330. They had lands and a chapel : the former were seized ; the latter, with

all its statues, razed to the ground in 1789.*

It was in Paris that part-singing was first made a science. *Coussemaker's* rare work, "L'Art Harmonique aux XII^e et XIII^e Siècles," based on a MS. preserved at Montpellier, proves the existence of a Paris school of counterpoint, whose teaching influenced the Netherlands, and was carried into Italy owing to the sojourn of the Popes at Avignon (1307-1377). This is one of the most important facts of musical history, for Italy, almost untouched by the influence of the troubadours, etc., became in the sixteenth century the home of music for the civilised world. *Palestrina* (i.e., Giovanni Pierluigi Sante, of Praeneste) would never have arisen but for the preparation which this French teaching gave to the Italian mind. The choruses which he supplied to his friend *Felippo Neri's* sacred dramas are the beginnings of the opera, and the germ of their style is found both in the old *Parismotets*, and in the Flemish school which grew out of Paris. These Paris musicians had the great merit of thoroughly breaking away from the narrowness of the old Church style. They adapted the popular music—of which the song-book preserved at Loccum Abbey near Bremen contains the oldest examples—and at the same time they systematised it, setting music, in fact, on the groove which has led it to its grand triumphs. Why England fell out of the reckoning ; why, from having been one of the most musical of nations, she became for centuries almost silent, adding nothing to the work which was perfected in one direction by Italians, in another by Germans, it is hard to tell. Some attribute all our æsthetic shortcomings to the Puritans ; others say we were too busy inventing machinery, and at the same time forming our Colonial Empire. But the fact remains. Edward the First, though he is falsely charged with massacring the Welsh bards, was a great patron of minstrels, and spent two hundred pounds (equivalent to some three thousand now) in music alone when his son was knighted. When Henry the Fifth was crowned, "the number of harpers in the Abbey of the West Minster was exceeding great." Agincourt was the occasion of a grand song, preserved among the Pepys MSS. at Cambridge—see Chap-

* In England they had guilds. A pillar at Beverly (1432) is inscribed "this pillar made the meynstryls."

pell's "Popular Music." "Owre Kynge went forth to Normandy with grace and myght of chyvalry. The God for hym wrought marvlusly." Henry the Eighth, too, and Elizabeth were patrons of music; but somehow—though Tallis is no mean composer—we had no Palestrina, no Corelli, no Bach, no Handel, not even a Lully.

Why? He who can answer that question may perhaps be able to do what I know I have not succeeded in doing—trace with firm hand the first beginnings of harmony in music.

UNCLE BOB'S NIECE.

By LESLIE KEITH.

Author of "The Chilcotis," etc.

CHAPTER IV.

THE hotel to which the cabman bore the Burtons as, in his eyes, the best in London, was at least, at the date of this history, the newest, though it can no longer claim that distinction.

It was a large pile, not far from Charing Cross, and in the sumptuousness of its fresh paint, its gilding, its upholstery, it was magnificent enough to please even Mr. Burton's somewhat exactingly florid taste. As for Tilly, half-asleep as she was, she felt that her adventures were about to begin, as she followed the chambermaid up a shallow flight of steps to a room finer than any she had ever occupied before. The MacAndrews' Edinburgh house in stately Moray Place could boast nothing so brave as the crimson and gold of this guest-chamber; and as for the Manse, its blameless austerity suffered an affront as she arraigned it in her imagination and found it lacking.

Guests who arrive at a London hotel without luggage, and especially guests of a manifestly provincial order, are not usually received with cordiality, but Uncle Bob—perhaps by his absolute certainty of himself—had a way of commanding belief in others. The doubts in the mind of the manager, if that astute person suffered such, were dispelled by the jingle of the gold Mr. Burton drew carelessly from his pocket.

Uncle Bob loved the sound of that chinking gold; loved it for the respect it bought for him now as heretofore. The arrival of the luggage, for which a porter was dispatched in a cab, was a further

guarantee, and by nightfall the travellers were settled in their new quarters, and Uncle Bob had won the respect of half the waiters by the lavishness of his orders and the capacity of his appetite.

With some dim idea, perhaps, of shielding Tilly—more likely out of an ostentatious desire to appear as rich as he was—he had ordered a private sitting-room for her special use. It was a large room, too large for one solitary little woman, and its range of windows looked obliquely upon the lion-guarded column, and on the ever-varying crowd that filled Trafalgar Square.

To Tilly, as surely to everyone who sees it for a first, or a second, or a third time, this endlessly changing and unending throng is as curious and thought-compelling a spectacle as one could well behold. So many a thousand faces, and never two faces alike; so many varying interests; so many out-leaping desires; so many hopes, fears, despairs, joys, in which yet no barter is possible! Here in London, the hugest hive of commerce the world knows, there are some things in which no man can trade—the heart's bitterness, the heart's delight, who can share or exchange these?

All those varying emotions, all those three-volumed romances, each with a plot, a beginning and an end to it, were walking about sedately or hurrying briskly, hidden under top-coats and tall hats, in the morning when Tilly's young eyes first looked on the moving panorama.

Omnibuses were doing a cheerful trade and went by laden with City men, who smoked, or read the morning papers, or exchanged words, or shook their fingers at each other in mysterious symbol; City women, there were too—an outcome, these, of this century—cashiers, and clerks and post-office girls, mostly sedate and business-like, and mostly dressed in black. The young working-woman of this generation is a great deal wiser than her grandmother, or her mother, for the matter of that; she is quite as independent as her brother, and could go round the world alone, without suffering so much as a blush or a tremor all the way.

To Tilly, fresh from country silences, it was all a trifle fearful, as well as very wonderful. But for this moving outside world, she might have felt her new grandeur a little oppressive. The hurry without was mated with the silence within. Uncle Bob had strolled off after their early breakfast to smoke; she had unpacked

her modest boxes ; she had taken out a bit of needlework and laid it beside her, and there was nothing else that she greatly inclined to do.

She had examined the great room from end to end, and looked at her own reflection in the mirrors from every possible angle and degree of distance ; and again and again, after each fresh tour of inspection, she was drawn to the window to watch big London running to and fro in the misty brightness of the November morning.

It had sufficed for one whole day, but by the next she began to grow restless, and to long—as only a country-bred girl can long—for the freshness of the wind on her cheeks. The waiter's silent and frequent appearances, too, disconcerted her. Ought one to have a new order ready for each apparition of his head within the door ? Or could it be possible that he was keeping guard over her ? She did not like either alternative, and the longing to go out grew from the moment she first conceived it, till she felt that it must be gratified.

She ran upstairs and put on her best frock. It had done duty for many a Sunday in the minister's pew at home, where it had been duly honoured with its meed of rustic admiration ; but its lustre seemed somehow dimmed under the new conditions. She met her own reflection in the long wardrobe mirror with a dissatisfied shake of the head.

" You are all wrong, all wrong, Tilly ; but never mind," she consoled herself, " you are going out where there are so many people that nobody will ever see you."

She looked into the sitting room, but Uncle Bob had not returned, and she went on alone.

Several people, among whom were some men, were chatting in the hall of the hotel or smoking on the steps, and most of them turned to look at her as she passed them with a light step and a well-carried head.

Tilly humbly thought that all the looks were in disparagement of her unfashionable dress. She could not tell what a quaint and pleasing picture she made in the dark blue gown which the best efforts of the country dressmaker had not managed to spoil, because Tilly's own good taste had restricted her in ornament—a dress that hung in plain folds to the top of her neat, thick boots, a little cloak of the same material, and a hat with a curly brim, under which her blue eyes glanced

fearlessly. Miss Tilly might have ransacked half London, and not found a costume nearly so becoming.

One of the strangers standing on the steps threw away the end of his cigar, and sauntering down behind her, followed her into the thronging world outside. What a teeming world it was ! In Lilliesmuir every man, woman, and child, not to speak of each cat and dog, knew Miss Burton, the minister's cousin. A walk down the long, straggling village street was, in its way, a royal procession, made up of kindly words and greetings ; here the faces which looked into hers wore a blank unrecognition. Tilly had yet to learn that London is the loneliest place in all the world. Not in the inviolable silence of her own brown moors ; not on the heights of her own remote hills ; may one be so entirely isolated as in this great city, where with every beat of time a new footfall meets your ear, a new face scans yours before it vanishes.

As yet, however, there was no reason why Tilly should feel anything but the sense of exhilaration that happy and contented people experience in any briskly-moving scene. She had turned towards the Strand, and though a great many people looked at her, there were so many more who did not look, that she was comforted, and began to forget her dress. She had a lurking wonder—which did not amount to a hope—whether the young man who had befriended her uncle last night might not reappear this morning. To her inexperience it seemed quite possible. She half wished that he would, and that she might speak to him ; for it lay burdensomely on her conscience that they had asked him to dinner, when neither the dianer, the hosts, nor the welcome were likely to be forthcoming. And what would he think of their gratitude then ?

Entertained with her thoughts, everything went well till she essayed to cross the busy street. Now, in all her brief career, though she had, it must be told, ridden plough-horses barebacked when she was small, and in later days had scampered fearlessly over the moors on Cousin Spencer's shaggy Sheltie, Miss Tilly had never hazarded the dangers of a London crossing. To the timid it bristles with perils, and Tilly's first futile attempt to overcome them left her with less courage to try a second.

Here was a chance, indeed, for the modest clerk ! Why was he not here to

avail himself of it? It was not his voice, though it was also a man's, but one never heard before, that said with careless ease :

"Will you allow me to see you across?"

She looked up into the strange face, rather startled for a moment, but the situation was dire; she had come farther than she knew, and she felt certain that the only way home lay on the other side of that unbridged stream.

"Thank you," she said hesitatingly; "I shall be very glad if you will."

"Then may I ask you to take my arm? We shall wait till the stream divides. Everything comes to him who waits. Here is our chance; we had better take it while it is offered us."

He led her safely over, under the heads of cab and omnibus horses with what seemed to Tilly an admirable calmness.

"Thank you," she said gratefully, looking up with frank eyes; "I could not have got over alone."

"Probably not," said the stranger with gravity.

"Are all crossings as bad as that?" she asked, not liking to turn away abruptly.

"Some are much worse. There's a hopeless one at the Mansion House, for instance, where quite a large number of people come to a disastrous end every year."

Tilly looked at him doubtfully.

"I can go alone now, thank you," she said. "It is quite a straight road to the hotel."

"May I venture to ask which hotel?"

She named it.

"Not quite straight, I think. There are at least two turnings and two crossings, each as formidable as the one we have surmounted."

"Then I needn't have crossed here?"

"That depends on where you want to go," he smiled. "If to the hotel, then not. Will you give me the further pleasure of showing you the way?"

"I think I remember it," she said, not quite liking to accept, and yet equally fearing to be rude in refusing this stranger's offer.

At Lilliesmuir she would have known just what to do, in the impossible case of anybody wanting to help her there. Suppose—for mere argument sake—she had fallen into the river, and had been rescued by some unknown person, the inevitable conclusion would be an invitation to the Manse for rest and refresh-

ment, and the minister's solemn thanks. The cases were hardly parallel. Must she walk with this gentleman in her train to their present dwelling-place, and seek out Uncle Bob to discharge their obligation to the stranger?

She looked so grave over this proposition that a lurking smile came into her companion's eyes.

"As I am going to the hotel also, perhaps you will allow me to walk behind you," he suggested. "Then if you should happen to forget the way—"

"Are you living there?" Tilly asked.

"I am living there. I think I had the pleasure of meeting your father in the smoking-room."

"My uncle," she amended.

"Your uncle," he bowed. "We had some talk which I, for one, found interesting."

"Then," she remarked, "if we are both going to the same place, I don't see why you should walk behind me."

"Thank you," the stranger answered. "I will walk beside you, if you will allow. If we take this turning you will find it quieter."

"This isn't the way I came," she said, looking about her.

"It is quite as near, and we shall avoid crossings, which I think you do not like."

"We haven't any at home," she said with a laugh. "Except on market-days, the sight of a single dog-cart is enough to bring everybody to door or window."

"It must be very quiet."

"It is quiet here too," she asserted, "after that noisy street. Is that water shining before us?"

"That is the river; the great Thames. This is the Embankment. Somewhere here, they say, your poet Burns is to have a statue erected in his honour, one of these days."

"How do you know he is my poet?" she asked naively, turning round quickly to him.

"Mr. Burton informed me he was Scotch," said her companion with admirable gravity.

Before they had compassed the short distance to the hotel—and to his honour it must be said, he took her there without deviation—he had learned a good deal more about her than that she was Scotch. Since he knew Uncle Bob, Tilly felt that it must be all right, and she chatted without reserve.

They went up the steps of the hotel

together almost like old acquaintances ; Tilly was smiling at something her companion said when two ladies, who had sent for a hansom, came out from the hall.

They both looked rather fixedly at the pair, and one of them turned to watch her as she nodded good-bye to her new friend and ran upstairs alone.

"I told you so, Honoria," said this lady to the other in a tone of satisfied conviction.

"I don't know, Maria," said the one addressed as Honoria.

"I know ; a bold, forward, pert little chit. I noticed her at dinner last night. I believe that man and she never met before this morning ! I saw her pass him in the hall as she went out—and to think of her running about the streets alone !"

"I thought it was the circumstance of her not being alone, you objected to. Poor little one ! she seems to have no one to look after her."

"Now you will make it your mission to look after her, I suppose ?" said Maria, with a toss of her befeathered head. "Well, we can't stop all day. Tell the man to drive to Marshall's first."

Meanwhile Tilly, all unconscious of the criticisms which were being passed on her behaviour, peeped into the sitting-room, and finding her uncle there, went in with a skip, and dropped him a lively curtsey. Then she flitted to the long mirror inserted in the wall, and for a few moments surveyed herself gravely.

"Well, little lass, and where have you been ?" growled Uncle Bob from the depths of his chair.

"I've been making a new acquaintance, Uncle Bob." She turned upon him : "Am I so very dowdy ?"

He looked at the straight, slim figure, the quaint, becoming dress, the hat with the curly brim, and the bright eyes under it.

"Pretty trim, I should say," was his verdict. "Been getting some new toggeries ?"

"No. I told you, making acquaintance with an acquaintance of yours."

"An acquaintance of mine ?"

"He said he met you in the smoking-room, and that he had enjoyed talking to you."

She retailed this little compliment with pride.

"A tall chap with a yellow beard—youngish ?"

"Not young," she said decidedly. "Forty at least. I do think Londoners

are the most obliging people in the world. What trouble they give themselves ! I might have been killed at a crossing but for this one, and I should certainly have lost my way and never found the road back to you any more."

"I guess you've got a good Scotch tongue in your head," said Uncle Bob, with a laugh, taking a light view of this possible tragedy.

"Perhaps they wouldn't have understood me," she said demurely. "I don't find I've acquired a Cockney accent yet, Uncle Bob." She came and perched herself on the corner of his chair : "Do you remember asking that poor young man to dinner—was it—or supper ?"

"What poor young man ?" Mr. Burton's instincts were generally hospitable, and how was he to remember all the young fellows whom he had from time to time invited to come and witness his greatness ?

"The one who helped us last night. If he goes to Mrs. Popham's—"

"Faith, he'll get nothing but the cold shoulder for his pains," said Uncle Bob with a huge laugh, able to take a humorous view of the situation now that it was two days old.

"Well, what are you going to do ?" asked Tilly.

"Eh, lass ! there's nothing to do. Would you have me go round to all the banks in London and ask for a young chap who showed an old chap the way to Prince's Gate ? As well seek a needle in a hay-stack. We must make it up to the new man instead, Tilly."

"That won't be the same," she said, getting up and walking the length of the room. "I must do something, anyhow," she said with energy, as she turned to face him again. "Do you know, I'm not like any other girl in London."

"Did the new acquaintance tell you that ?" he asked with a grin.

"No. Do you think I'd have let him ?" she said indignantly. "I didn't need to be told. I had only to look—you have only to look—to see for yourself."

"Well, there are shops enough, and near enough, if that's all, my lass ; it's easy settled. We'll have a cruise round them to-morrow."

"I won't spend much," she said, coming back to her perch.

"You'll spend what I give you to spend," he said, dictatorially. "That's a bargain, and you can give me a kiss."

That night, at table d'hôte—the only meal she took in public—Tilly found herself seated near her new acquaintance, and learned that his name was Behrens.

"Got a foreign cut about him," said Uncle Bob. "But he seems a knowing chap."

The lady named Honoria, whom the hotel books could have shown to be Miss Walton, was also seated near, and looked at Tilly very often. Once, when their eyes met, she smiled, and Tilly smiled back, pleased with the friendly overture.

Miss Walton saw nothing very blameworthy in Tilly's conduct. She did not originate many remarks, and mostly listened in silence to a conversation carried on across her person—a conversation, or rather a monologue; for when Uncle Bob held the theme he scarce allowed his neighbour to insert a word. His talk was enlightening enough in its own way, though it chiefly concerned the chances of fortune on Australian sheep-runs, and the gains to be wrung from the dead-meat trade. To him, at least, it was so stimulating, that in the glow of his satisfaction he invited Mr. Behrens to pay them a visit in Tilly's sitting-room, and taste a particular brand of champagne which had pleased his fancy.

If Miss Walton were minded to befriend Tilly's solitude, her chances seemed to diminish with the passing days. Tilly, indeed, could hardly complain of solitude, since whenever she had her uncle's company she had Mr. Behrens's also.

He made himself very pleasant, and he knew a great deal, and seemed to have nothing to do with his leisure, save to bestow it on his new friends. He arranged Tilly's sight-seeing in the most skilful fashion, and proved himself a competent guide, guessing accurately just the sort of information that would interest her, and not overtax Uncle Bob's somewhat limited intelligence.

Tilly took it all pleasantly and easily enough. Mr. Behrens was her uncle's friend, and as such she accepted him without knowing very much about him, or analysing the slenderness of their knowledge concerning him.

In this respect Tilly and her uncle were

alike guileless as babes. For a man who had knocked about the world, he was surprisingly simple, though he thought himself so cunning. Yet even across his dense brain there sometimes crept a passing wonder whether this was the best sort of life for Tilly—his little Tilly, for whom he had planned, and schemed, and grown rich these many years, and for whom he meant to make the world so beautiful.

"You haven't bought those gowns yet, little lass," he said one night, when by a rare chance the obliging Behrens was absent.

"How could I, dear, when we've been seeing half London? In spite of his great friendship for you, Mr. Behrens would hardly like to be asked to choose my dresses."

"You don't take to him, Tilly?"

"Upon the whole, I take to you more," she said demurely; "and it is rather a treat to have you all to myself just for once."

"I wish you had a woman friend," he said with unwonted gravity, not meeting this sally.

"A woman friend?" she said. "What kind of a woman friend? 'Lisbeth from the Manse, perhaps, to snub me as she snubs cousin Spencer? Or—Mrs. Popham? I believe you are hankering after Mrs. Popham more than I am!"

"Mrs. Popham is no friend of yours or mine," he began with such threatening vehemence that she hastened to say:

"Well, then, there are those cousins of mine we've got to discover. There are sure to be girls among them. Very likely they are all girls. Will six or eight women friends who are cousins as well, please you, Uncle Bob?"

"Time enough to say when we do discover them. There's no hurry, lass; we've done without them a goodish bit, and we can get along wanting them still. You can't take your own kith and kin up and drop them again if they're not to your taste. We'll ca' canny, my woman."

"That's a very pleasing sentiment," said Tilly, giving him a hug of reward for it; "if ever you should tire of me, Uncle Bob, I'll quote your own words against you."